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SUBJECT: USAU: AU UNVEILS STRATEGIC AND BUDGET PLANS TO
PARTNERS GROUP

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN A. SIMON, REASONS 1.4. (B) AND (D).

¶1. (U) Summary: Peace and Security will remain one of the African Union's (AU) top priorities in the coming years, according to the proposed budget for 2009 that the organization presented to its international partners group on November 13. The AU's other "pillars" upon which the budget, as well as the 2009-12 strategic plan, will rest, consist of Cooperation, Development, and Regional Integration, Shared Values, and Institutional Capacity Building. Less than 40 percent of the previous four-year plan was implemented, a result AU Commission Deputy Chairperson Erastus Mwencha attributed to overly ambitious expectations and also a lack of financial and human capacity.

¶2. (C) The AU Partners Group also exchanged information about current developments around the African continent. Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra reported that the situation in eastern Congo is not improving despite the call for a cease-fire, and he announced that he would be traveling there next week. Lamamra also warned of a "serious degradation" of the situation in Somalia due to the worsening humanitarian aid situation, acts of piracy, and Al-Shabab's capture of the port city of Marka. Similarly, the AU had little positive to report about political developments in Zimbabwe, although Deputy Chairperson Mwencha told Ambassador that the AU could eventually play a greater role in helping resolve that crisis. End Summary.

AU Budget for 2009

¶3. (U) At the AU Partners Group meeting on November 13, the AU presented its proposed \$152.2 million draft budget for 2009 and the four pillars upon which the budget, and the 2009-12 strategic plan, will rest. Out of the total \$152.2 million, \$103.3 million would be for operational purposes while the remaining \$48.9 million would go to programs. The operational budget is fully funded by member states and the program budget is mainly funded by the AU's development partners, which have thus far committed to the AU \$32.5 million. (FYI: Seventy-five percent of the member state financing comes from four countries of which Libya, Nigeria, and South Africa are the largest contributors. End FYI.)

¶4. (U) The program budget breaks down as follows: Peace and Security, \$5 million; Cooperation, Development, and Regional Integration, \$22.9 million; Shared Values, \$2.9 million; and Institutional Capacity Building, \$18.1 million.

¶5. (U) AUC Deputy Chairperson Mwencha previewed the 2009 budget by noting that the African continent, which had experienced 5 percent growth rates at the start of the 21st

century, was now facing higher fuel prices, electricity shortages, a food crisis, and a global financial crisis. "Africa's situation is looking extremely bleak. A number of countries are recording very low growth rates," he said. In the midst of these shocks, the AU's previous four-year strategic plan lacked the financial and human resources to fully implement what Mwencha admitted was an "ambitious" plan. Implementation of the plan did not reach 40 percent.

¶6. (U) The AU achieved its strongest results (72 percent) in the area of Peace and Security, Commissioner Lamamra said. He said initiatives such as the African Standby Force would get a greater push in 2009. In contrast, only 40 percent of the Institutional Capacity Building portion of the plan has been implemented, and the results for the other pillars are likewise dismal, Mwencha said. He said the plan's Cooperation, Development, and Regional Integration objective is "where the whole issue of unity and prosperity rests." The AU's international partners concurred. "Without good governance, peace and security are not possible. Wherever we look we see proof of that," the German Ambassador to the AU said.

Current Developments in Crisis Areas

¶7. (U) Following the budget discussion, the international partners received a series of updates from the AU about the situation in a number of African countries:

-- Sudan: Lamamra announced he was overjoyed by developments

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in Sudan. Chad and Sudan had agreed to return ambassadors six months after diplomatic ties were ruptured, Sudanese President Omar El-Bashir had called for an immediate cease-fire in Darfur, and there is progress on UNAMID troop deployment. He said UNAMID is over 50 percent deployed today, would meet the 60 percent benchmark by January, and the 80 percent benchmark by March. He hinted ICC action could bring all of the progress to a halt.

-- Somalia: Despite some positive trends and support for the Djibouti Agreement, there remains "an extreme" humanitarian situation in Somalia as well as acts of piracy off its coast, Lamamra reported. Al-Shabab's seizure of the port city of Marka has raised fears that they are preparing for an attack on Mogadishu. "In the days ahead, we fear a serious degradation of the situation," Lamamra said.

-- Congo: The situation in eastern Congo is not improving, said Lamamra, who announced that he will be traveling to the embattled region next week. Despite calls in Nairobi last week for a cease-fire and the opening of humanitarian corridors, "the situation does not seem to be evolving in that direction," Lamamra said. "There is a continuing escalation in the fighting," he added. He also said that Nigeria had called for an emergency meeting of the AU's Peace and Security Council to discuss the violence in eastern Congo. Partners voiced support for Lamamra's mission to eastern Congo as well as for an AU emergency meeting.

-- Zimbabwe: Lamamra said he had "no positive developments" to report concerning Zimbabwe, where President Mugabe and opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai are bickering over the formation of a new inclusive government and the sharing of key ministries. "We need the parties to make an additional push," Lamamra said.

¶8. (U) On Zimbabwe, the Ambassador asked if the AU saw the deadlock at the SADC meeting as an opportunity and a requirement for it to assume a larger role in helping resolve the political crisis. Lamamra replied that the AU was in contact with the key actors and will "bring its weight to bear." However, he noted that the AU is limited by the

parameters set at last July's AU Summit, which gave the lead role in the process to SADC. Therefore, the AU could not be the "locomotive" but the "complementary engine" on the Zimbabwe issue.

19. (C) After the Partners Group meeting, the Ambassador sought Mwencha's views on the AU role in Zimbabwe. Mwencha said that the AU wants to play a larger role in resolving Zimbabwe's political crisis (even though there is some trepidation about dealing with Mugabe), but it cannot do so as long as the regional body, SADC, has the mandate for dealing with the impasse. Mwencha said he would raise this issue when AU President and SADC member Kikwete is in Addis Ababa on November 20. He added that it was important that this be resolved before the AU Summit in Addis in late January, or it will dominate the event, where he expected other AU leaders "to tear Mugabe apart."

YAMAMOTO